

### Amendments to the Claims

Please amend Claims 1-15 as follows.

1. (Currently Amended) An ink jet recording apparatus for performing image formation on a recording medium by using a recording head having plural discharge ports being arranged to discharge ink from ~~said the~~ discharge ports, comprising:

preliminary discharging means for performing preliminary discharges by discharging ink from ~~said the~~ discharge ports irrespective of ~~said the~~ image formation;

capping means for enabling a cap for capping ~~said the~~ plural discharge ports to be in contact with and retract from ~~the a~~ discharge port surface of ~~said the~~ recording head where ~~said the~~ discharge ports are formed; and

selection means for selecting whether ~~said the~~ preliminary discharges are to be performed in the status of having said cap ~~to be~~ in contact with ~~said the~~ discharge port surface or in the status of having said cap ~~to be~~ away retracted from ~~said the~~ discharge port surface, according to the number of ink discharges by said preliminary discharging means,

wherein ~~said the~~ ink discharge number in the status of having said cap ~~to be~~ in contact is ~~made larger~~ selected to be greater than ~~said the~~ ink discharge number in the status of having said cap ~~to be~~ away retracted.

2. (Currently Amended) An ink jet recording ~~head~~ apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein when ~~said the~~ preliminary discharges are performed in the status of having said cap ~~to be away~~ retracted, ~~said the~~ preliminary discharges are performed toward said cap or ~~said the~~ preliminary discharges are performed toward an ink receiving portion other than said cap.

3. (Currently Amended) An ink jet recording apparatus according to Claim 1, further comprising suction means for sucking ~~said the~~ ink in said cap by ~~giving~~ generating negative pressure in said cap, wherein when ~~said the~~ preliminary discharges are performed in the status of having said cap ~~to be~~ in contact, said cap is communicated with the air outside, and suction is also effectuated by said suction means.

4. (Currently Amended) An ink jet recording apparatus according to Claim 3, wherein when ~~said the~~ suction and said preliminary discharges are performed, ~~said the~~ suction is performed for a designated time in the status of having the inside of said cap communicated with the air outside after ~~said the~~ preliminary discharges terminate.

5. (Currently Amended) An ink jet recording apparatus according to Claim 3, wherein when ~~said the~~ suction and ~~said the~~ preliminary discharges are performed, ~~said the~~ suction is performed for a designated time in the status of having the inside of said cap communicated with the air outside before ~~said the~~ preliminary discharges begin.

6. (Currently Amended) An ink jet recording apparatus according to Claim 3, wherein the discharge frequency in performing ~~said~~ the suction and ~~said~~ the preliminary discharges is lower than the discharge frequency in performing only ~~said~~ the preliminary discharges.

7. (Currently Amended) An ink jet recording apparatus according to Claim 1, further comprising wiping means for wiping off ~~said~~ the ink adhering to ~~said~~ the discharge port surface, wherein when a predetermined number of preliminary discharges is executed by said preliminary discharging means, said wiping means wipes off ~~said~~ the ink adhering to ~~said~~ the discharge port surface.

8. (Currently Amended) An ink jet recording apparatus for performing image formation on a recording medium by using a recording head having plural discharge ports being arranged to discharge ink from ~~said~~ the discharge ports, comprising:

preliminary discharging means for performing preliminary discharges by discharging ink from ~~said~~ the discharge ports irrespective of ~~said~~ the image formation;

capping means for enabling a cap for capping ~~said~~ the plural discharge ports to be in contact with and retract from ~~the~~ a discharge port surface of ~~said~~ the recording head where ~~said~~ the discharge ports are formed; and

selection means for selecting whether suction by suction means and ~~said the~~ preliminary discharges are to be performed in the status of having said cap ~~to be~~ in contact with ~~said the~~ discharge port surface and having the inside of said cap communicated with the air outside, ~~said the~~ preliminary discharges are to be performed in the status of having said cap ~~to be~~ in contact with ~~said the~~ discharge port surface, or ~~said the~~ preliminary discharges are to be performed in the status of having the cap ~~to be~~ away retracted from ~~said the~~ discharge port surface, according to the number of ink discharges by said preliminary discharging means,

wherein ~~said the~~ ink discharge number of ~~said the~~ suction and ~~said the~~ preliminary discharges being performed in the status of having said cap ~~to be~~ in contact is ~~made larger~~ selected to be greater than ~~said the~~ ink discharge number of ~~said the~~ preliminary discharges being performed in the status of having said cap ~~to be~~ in contact, and ~~said the~~ ink discharge number of ~~said the~~ preliminary discharges being performed in the status of having said cap ~~to be~~ in contact is ~~made larger~~ selected to be greater than ~~said the~~ ink discharge number in the status of having said cap ~~to be~~ away retracted.

9. (Currently Amended) An ink jet recording ~~head~~ apparatus according to Claim 8, wherein when ~~said the~~ preliminary discharges are to be performed in the status of having said cap ~~to be~~ away retracted, ~~said the~~ preliminary discharges are performed toward said cap or ~~said the~~ preliminary discharges are performed toward an ink receiving portion other than said cap.

10. (Currently Amended) An ink jet recording apparatus according to Claim 8, wherein when ~~said~~ the suction and ~~said~~ the preliminary discharges are performed, ~~said~~ the suction is performed for a designated time in the status of having the inside of said cap communicated with the air outside after ~~said~~ the preliminary discharges terminate.

11. (Currently Amended) An ink jet recording apparatus according to Claim 8, wherein when ~~said~~ the suction and ~~said~~ the preliminary discharges are performed, ~~said~~ the suction is performed for a designated time in the status of having the inside of said cap communicated with the air outside before ~~said~~ the preliminary discharges begin.

12. (Currently Amended) An ink jet recording apparatus according to Claim 8, wherein the discharge frequency in performing ~~said~~ the suction and ~~said~~ the preliminary discharges is lower than the discharge frequency in performing only ~~said~~ the preliminary discharges.

13. (Currently Amended) An ink jet recording apparatus according to Claim 8, further comprising wiping means for wiping off ~~said~~ the ink adhering to ~~said~~ the discharge port surface, wherein when a predetermined number of preliminary discharges is executed by said preliminary discharging means, said wiping means wipes off ~~said~~ the ink adhering to ~~said~~ the discharge port surface.

14. (Currently Amended) An ink jet recording apparatus for performing image formation on a recording medium by using a recording head having plural discharge ports being arranged to discharge ink from ~~said~~ the discharge ports, comprising:

preliminary discharging means for performing preliminary discharges by discharging ink from ~~said~~ the discharge ports irrespective of ~~said~~ the image formation;

capping means for enabling a cap for capping ~~said~~ the plural discharge ports to be in contact with and retract from ~~the~~ a discharge port surface of ~~said~~ the recording head where ~~said~~ the discharge ports are formed; and

preliminary discharge control means for controlling said preliminary discharging means to selectively perform ~~said~~ the plurality of preliminary discharges having different discharge numbers of ~~said~~ the ink, said control means controlling ~~said~~ the preliminary discharge operations corresponding to the performance of ~~said~~ the preliminary discharges in the status of having said cap ~~to be in contact with~~ to be away retracted from ~~said~~ the discharge port surface, per a plurality of ~~said~~ the preliminary discharge operations.

15. (Currently Amended) An ink jet recording apparatus according to Claim 14, wherein the ink discharge number of ~~said~~ the preliminary discharge operation in the status of having said cap ~~to be~~ in contact with ~~said~~ the discharge port surface is ~~made larger~~ controlled to be greater than the ink discharge number of ~~said~~ the preliminary discharge operation in the status of having said cap ~~to be away~~ retracted from ~~said~~ the discharge port surface.